All food was also made up of the 4 elements. Here rice was of particular importance. The body was seen as built and maintained by rice. Flesh in fact was rice, an image probably derived from Buddhist scriptures.[11]

Each element carried with it its substantive aspect of heat, flowing, etc., and its astrological nature and relations. Elements could be compatible or incompatible with each other. Earth, water, wind, iron, and wood for instance were compatible. Gold "got along" with all elements. Fire, though, was incompatible with wind, water, and wood for it could destroy their proper proportion.

The effect of astral and planetary relationships at the moment of birth on one's constituent elements induced qualities of character.[12] Mind and body were a continuum. Because family members were born at different moments of time, intrafamilial temperamental differences were expected.[13] Persons made up of incompatible elements quarreled. Thus, friction might occur between parents and children. For a husband and wife, who lived in especially close proximity, the constitutional elements were of special importance. Through marital relationships their elements were in physical contact. Consequently, in the old days, a couple comtemplating marriage ascertained through their horoscopes the compatibility of their natal elements to determine whether they could live together without destroying each other. For instance, a girl with much fire in her make-up was easily angered and prone to fevers. She could not make a successful marriage with a boy with much wood.

Physiology

A single physiological process controlled the functioning of the body and the mind; i.e., the equilibrium of its elements. If the elements were in proper balance, proportion or harmony, a person was healthy; if an element were excessive or deficient,

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11. "This, my formed body, is composed of the 4 Elements, generated by Father and Mother, built up from rice, porridge and sour gruel," says the Buddha (Suriyabongse 1951:11).

12. Merit, the other determinant of character, is discussed in "Influences on Health" below.

13. Cf. the proverb "The joints (knots) on the same stem are nevertheless unequally spaced, so even brothers are of different minds," (Gerini 1904:14).

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a condition which also affected the functioning of the others, he was ill or emotionally disturbed.[14] For example, dropsy, swelling, and yellow eyes came from excess water; cholera and constipation from earth mists. Wind and fire were the great trouble-makers.

Wind "was stronger than the other three elements." Either blowing wind or still air easily penetrated the skin and caused difficulties all the way from flatulence, stomach-ache and diarrhea to a minor head-ache and dizziness ("if wind whirls inside the body, the house swims around"); from incessant crying to serious interference with breathing, hence fainting and death. An accident, such as a cut or broken bone, disturbed, and might "let out," the air. Acute pain ensued if "rigidity" of earth, fire, or water interfered with the proper movements of the internal winds.

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Anger and fever were both in the category of excess fire. Since fire was particularly implicated in disturbed social relations, coolness was emphasized as the desirable state of body and mind. The blessings for both sexes at birth and at the marriage ceremonies enjoined the individual to be "cool and happy." There was some evidence that cool natures were tender (on) natures. Since women by nature were assumed to be "tender," and men not, a difference in element constitution may have been sex-linked. However, everyone knew of women who were not tender. For persons abundantly endowed with fire, temper control through temperature control was a constant preoccupation, for the allowable margin of fluctuation was especially narrow.

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Food occupied an especially important place in a person's welfare because food controlled the fire element.[15] The following material on diet is the background for some of the dietary injunctions during pregnancy and lactation.

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14. In view of Thailand's ancient Indian contacts, the parallels (and differences) between Bang Chan, and Hindu Ayurvada as described by Opler (1963:32-35), are noteworthy.

[177]

15. "What was drunk or eaten by its decaying created the fire element in the body" (Suriyabongse 1954:12).

People used their knowledge of food properties to ameliorate their physical condition. During lactation, for instance, women ate vegetables or not "depending on the condition of the baby," for breast milk was very easily affected by adverse properties. In the broader context of general dietary needs, people entertained ideas about the suitability of certain foods to certain ages, sexes, occupations, conditions, and occasions (Hauck, et al: 42-50). Nevertheless, persons often risked an undesirable effect in food for pleasure. The proper banana variety for ritual use was the tiny kluai nam, yet it was not planted much in Bang Chan because the people "did not like the taste." They substituted the "pleasant-tasting" kluai nam wā. Here orthodoxy came off second. The heat of alcoholic drink relished by men and older women often pressed the margin of safe temperature control. The cobra--turtle--or chicken--plus--alcohol feasts exemplified how readily the elders gambled even on the increment of sin from eating meat, or risked an over-heated temper, for the joy of eating such cherished delicacies.

Food dislikes, if temporary, reflected an imbalance of elements; if usual, an individual constitutional set of the person's elements. To eat disliked food was therefore positively harmful. To urge someone to eat disliked food was wrong.[16]

## Illness

All illness, anxiety, and soul loss was caused by intrusions from outside the body. The intrusion might be from a supernatural source (wiset:powerful) or natural (tām thammachāt) (Textor:10) but in either case the result was the same: disruption of the elements. Anxiety, whether caused by a social situation such as fear of frustration, by a broken bone or by a fever, also was a disruption of balance. An attack by the supernatural disease missile, "khun"[17] gave rise to the classic symptoms of wind-excess: "a man cried all the time and had flatulency." Elements were also disorganized by spirit attack. The victim suffered hysteria, paroxysm, flatulence, convulsion,

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16. Phillips (p. 65) reported that parents did not give their child a disliked medicine because "it offends him.... It is better not to give it to him than hurt his feelings."

17. This small skin missile invaded the body and then expanded to the size of a buffalo. Intentional attack (sorcery) might kill; accidental, merely pained (cf. Textor:116-127). Suspected khun was one of the few reasons why a family would authorize so grave a violation of the body of a deceased member as an autopsy.

828 753 or fainting, and also such localized trauma as abcesses. Similar behavior followed the influence of malevolent magical amulets, incantations, and love magic. Natural intrusions may be exemplified by the seasonal influences of rain, which brought on too much water element; of heat, which increased fire; and of wind, which cooled too much or brought in certain fevers, e.g. north fever (khai nŭa). An accident was a natural cause of disequilibrium. A cut might let out the air or a soul.

774 [761] [953] Any lost soul, if not restored, meant death. Souls were lost from falls or frights or from spirit attack, a condition recognized by persistent crying, hysteria, and unconsciousness. The exits were at the top of the head, the palms of the hands, and the soles of the feet; the latter 2 sometimes localized at the 2 thumbs and the 2 great toes. One of the old beliefs associated an element with one of the four ṭhāttaphŭt souls (Textor:130). When one of these souls was lost one whole element was gone. Loss of the khwan soul was more frequent than any other, especially during childhood. Its care throughout life was very much in mind. The khwan[18] played an [844] especially prominent part during childbirth.

755 [262] [757] If a person were only slightly sick, he might first try to overcome his physical complaint by attention to diet. Very rarely did he by himself buy some medicine at a drug store. If it were a case of a child's lost khwan, women performed the rite for its recovery. When the khwan of an adult was affected, men performed a strengthening rite (thaa khwan), or a priest gave a holy water bath. If the person were very ill, holy cotton thread (sāi sin) was tied at wrist, ankle, and neck so as to shut off the soul exits. An elder relative or spouse might also "hon," i.e. vow food or liquor in return for the help of supernatural beings; or, with Buddhist "sacred things" in mind, promise the ordination of the afflicted person, or oneself, or some interested relative. In this case, the relatives had long since turned for help from the arts of medicine.

278 755 The Arts of Medicine

Medical knowledge comprised on the one hand a pharmacology of materia medica, and on the other, the far more important

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18. The conceptualization of this soul was Brahmanic in source, rather than Buddhist (cf. Martinie, 1952:370).

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775 Man was higher on the scale than woman.[20] Progress toward
[562] Nipphan was not assured but had to be earned. With sinful behavior a person might be catapulted back to being a beast. He who stole would "be born and die 500 times before he could even grow up." Almost everyone had to be sent to purgatory
[776] where demons carried on tortures until he had suffered enough to be released for rebirth. The evil spirits (phī) that wandered frighteningly in Bang Chan were part of the legions whose job was to increase deserved suffering on this earth.

771 The people of Bang Chan felt they could discern even
782 of themselves who was meritful and who was not according to
• 828 human circumstances, constitution, and behavior. A meritorious person was healthy, happy, and successful in all undertakings. He enjoyed good health and long life, a kindly personality, many fine children, wealth, high status, intelligence, and luck. Astrologically, he was born on a day
[775] of good confluences, of gold and auspicious signs. He who lacked merit, because of sins committed perhaps many ages ago, was born on an unfortunate day. He suffered early death, deformities, unhappiness, poverty, and had a cruel nature.
[753] Illness, whether supernatural or natural, whether induced by wind or sorcery or what, struck as part of the suffering brought on by former sin. It was accepted in the conviction that whoever suffered had brought it on himself. When merit ran out, or when sin cancelled out and then exceeded one's merit, suffering and premature death occurred, despite all human efforts. Because of the prevalence of illness and of life's difficulties, major and minor, no one, no matter how outwardly fortunate and so evidently meritorious, had at this earthly level of existence enough merit to escape some suffering and frustration. By the same token, though, no person was without hope. By making merit or by suffering in this life, existence would be happier in the next. The making of merit was in the forefront of daily conscious effort and even conversations of the people of Bang Chan.

751
789 The long-range protection against all illness was to live virtuously and make merit. However, to guard against temporary supernatural intrusions, everyone possessed and
[577] usually wore Buddha lockets and other amulets. Some
[782] underwent tatooing, men having Cambodian or other figures,
[304] women, 2 small dots tatooed on the torso under the arm.

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20. Men had achieved greater "other-worldliness" while women were more bound by the phenomena of the flesh (cf. Kirsch, 1961).

## Chapter III

## PREGNANCY AND PARTURITION

842 **Conception**

Conception occurred when a khwan-soul flew into the womb of a woman during sexual intercourse. "A father and a mother are equally important because there is no birth in the world without both. An infant is the product of both sexes," said a priest in a Bang Chan sermon.[21]

842 775 [782] [828] The little being in the womb from the moment of conception was a specific individual who had lived many times before, meritful or sinful according to its previous actions. Desire for rebirth was in itself evidence of inadequate merit to effect release from incarnation. Though this life was to some extent a fresh start, his character (nisai) and heart (jhai) were already largely formed through his store of merit and ingrained habit from former existences.[22]

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[779] 21. The teachings of the Buddha state: "Rebirth takes place when a father and a mother come together, and it is the mother's period, and the one to be born is present" (Suriyabongse:20).

22. He bore with him the last ideas spoken to him at his most recent death. The Visuddhi-Magga tells how this carry-over occurs. One of the categories of karma, was the "close at hand, karma remembered at the point of death [which] springs up with [a person] in rebirth" (Warren:246). As King Mongkut lay dying, everyone in the room called out "arahat!" in his ear incessantly so that by "remembering it at the point of death" he might be reborn an Arahat (E.R.E. "Siam": 487). Another pertinent category of karma was the "habitual": "karma that has become habitual through frequent repetition. This brings on rebirth when [other] forms are absent" (Warren:246). Here is the basis for the inborn character, heart and ingrained habit (cf. J.R. Hanks, 1959, and the section below on "Habit" (khoei).

844 In view of the stake of a child in the successful outcome of his own birth,[39] under what circumstances might a child not be helpful? This was explained by merit (bun) and habit (khoei).

Merit

782 828 761 844 Since merit, gained through virtuous behavior, determined a person's character, circumstances, health, and longevity, the merit of mother and child set the course of childbirth. It will be recalled that persons who lacked merit because of previous sins were cruel, lived short lives, and had to endure suffering, while meritorious persons enjoyed success, kindly natures, and long life. Yet an outwardly fortunate person might be at the point of merit-exhaustion, when suffering commenced. Any mother who suffered greatly lacked merit. In one case, "7 babies of a woman died young while the eighth and subsequent ones lived, proving she had to suffer greatly to work off some misdeed in former existences. She was given the trouble of bearing and feeding the child, and the child did not have enough merit to grow up, and so to feed her in return." Her punishment was to bear non-meritorious children who could not live. A woman's premature[40] death in childbirth was caused only by her own lack of merit.

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[171] 39. By way of contrast, consider how parturition is pictured in the United States. The active role is played by the midwife or doctor, or some other outsider, who "delivers," i.e. "liberates," the child from the womb, or frees the mother and baby from one another. "A child is born" presents the child as completely passive; in "to have a baby" the mother is relatively so. The most active English renderings are "to bear a child" and "to give birth to a child." It is noteworthy that modern anaesthetics have tended to increase the passivity of the mother.

40. The idea of a natural term of life was described in the Visuddhi-Magga: "The Karma that caused conception has ripened to a termination, although the dependence for continuing the series constituting the term of life be not exhausted. Death by the exhaustion of the natural term of life occurs when the span of life, the nutritive powers... proper to any given grade of existence come to an end..." (Warren:252).

Only when the youngster was satiated did she gobble the remainder.[50] Parents often commented that girls in general were obedient and good, but boys were not. Everyone spoke, however, of exceptions. The capacity to play the female role grew with the child. It was not completed with the physiological maturity of first menstruation but only with ritual maturity.

The rituals to fit a woman for her office, described as "directly related to the welfare of the child," had 4 specific purposes. They perfected her as a compassionate being; restored and strengthened her body; improved her capacities as a nourisher; and strengthened her own khwan. The key to each of these aims was the holy fire.[51] Because actions taken by the fire were immediately and permanently effective, every effort was made to induce auspicious happenings. Words spoken by the fire had compelling effect so even ordinary speech became magical. Speaking of the fire's hotness so raised its heat that a mother was burned. For this reason, uninformed or careless visitors like children or foreigners were a danger.

According to Buddhist thinking, suffering developed compassion. Through the discomfort of pregnancy, followed by the anguish of childbirth and the heat of the fire, a woman became compassionate and so achieved the guide-line for moral behavior. Then a woman was sure to be touched with pity for the younger or less fortunate. One teacher despite the inconvenience went home twice a day from school to nurse her new baby because she "pitied" him too much to hire a wet-nurse. It was "pitiful" to see a child at another woman's breast for it implied that its mother was either unwilling or unable to nurse it. Thus, babies were rarely nursed by others than their own mothers.

The fire also strengthened a woman by ridding her of bad blood and foul fluids. Wind and Fire, the 2 spirit guardians of the elements necessary to the occasion, were invoked to assist in the drying of the uterus. In addition, strengthening

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50. Boys too fed their younger siblings but their purpose was a power-play: "to assure obedience in the future" (cf. Hanks and Phillips:648).

51. This fire was kept entirely separate from the one for cooking and boiling of water. It was ritually lit and ritually extinguished at the end of the fire-rest.

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to choose, even if in this case it was seemingly to his own detriment—he knows what is best for himself. Even the incompetent, helpless infant is an independent soul with his own will and right of determination, and his dignity must be respected.

It must be recognized of course that in the cosmology of Bang Chan the infant is anything but a conative *tabula rasa*. When he enters the world of human beings he brings with him not only a stock of individually accumulated merit (*bun*) and demerit (*baap*) from countless previous lives which will affect his being in this one, but also a host of other forces which predetermine his character: his *khwaan* (soul-stuff), *winjaan* (psycho-biological motive power), *caj* (heart), and *nidsaj* or *ʔupanidsaj* (ingrained character), among others. (J. R. Hanks 1959 has a brilliant exposition of the role of these elements.) In a very real sense the infant enters the world of humans as a developed, or partially developed, psychological being. Human influences, particularly virtue and "good habits," can be inculcated into him, but they are ultimately limited by these pre-natally determined characteristics. Much of Bang Chan child rearing is actually a series of perpetual compromises between (a) parents surrendering to what they think are the child's predetermined traits (and while this represents an extraordinary respect for his infantile individuality, it also leads in a developmental sense to much of the solipsism to which we have been referring throughout); (b) parents trying to come to terms with, or overcome, his preordained characteristics by inculcating good habits through example, coaxing, and whipping (the three modes of socialization, in order of priority, although villagers are more prone to talk about whippings than actually give them; most are too tenderhearted, and the rare whipping is almost always the result of sudden rage); and (c) leaving the child to his own devices. The third differs from the first in that it focuses on the parent's concerns rather than the child's and indicates indifference rather than respect. Thus, in contrast to the illustration above, one constantly sees children, generally under eight years of age, "annoying" conversing adults (primarily by making noises, although not necessarily to get the latter's attention) to which the parent responds with continuous but intermittent "tsk, tsks." The adult never raises the volume of his admonition, never gets increasingly disturbed, and eventually gives up while the children continue on their merry, noise-making way. The parent's lack of genuine concern and compulsion is not lost upon the child. Although events of this type are not overly noticeable in Bang Chan—precisely because they occur in such an easygoing and unremarkable way—they do take place repeatedly, and represent one of the principal interactional themes of the parent-child relationship. Children learn quickly that although parents will go through little ritualistic forms of controlling them,

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57 must be extremely careful not to phrase it as a direct refutation of the speaker. Again, there is present in this approach the Thai assumption that the most important aspect of a social relationship is the psychic comfort and welfare of the persons involved, not the truth or validity of the matter under discussion. The overriding ethic is that each person not only has a right to be heard, but should be made to feel comfortable as well.

57 152 *156 Related to the above, but distinctive enough to require a category of its own, is the form of politeness expressed in the villagers' nervous laughter and in their preoccupation with inconsequential topics of conversation. Laughter and smiling is such a universal attribute of Thai demeanor (an early volume on Siam by W. A. R. Wood was in fact entitled *Land of Smiles*) that it is not always easy to distinguish precisely between this particular form and other more relaxed expressions of lightheartedness. From the point of view of social intention—to be appealing and inoffensive to others—they are probably not distinguishable. What sets this form apart is mainly the situation in which it is found: a villager is apt to laugh nervously when talking about unhappy or unfortunate experiences. Likewise he will laugh or resort to inconsequential topics when trying to get something from another person or knowing that someone is trying to get something from him, in either case being unsure of how the other person will react; when meeting a person, often of higher status, for the first time and feeling compelled to relate to him, but not knowing quite how. Again, this mode of interaction is clearly not unique to Bang Chan. However, villagers resort to it so frequently, or define so many situations as the kind necessitating its use, that it emerges as one of the most salient modalities of Thai interaction. In a sense, the nervousness that is betrayed indicates some of the internal strain that villagers undergo in maintaining a constant front of politeness.

152 *156 • 828 It should be noted, however, that they are well aware of their uneasiness: they will often admit it to you in more relaxed moments. Also, other villagers in attendance can immediately spot it, and will tell you that the person was nervous. What is so characteristically nice about the villagers, however, is that they will almost never take advantage of a person's nervousness to score a point for themselves. Uneasiness is defined simply as a neutral personality trait, part of the way in which an individual presents himself and not a symptom of psychic weakness. In fact, from the point of view of influencing the purpose or direction of an interaction, it is usually ignored. What is *socially* important is that a person act nicely, not how he feels about the way he acts; the latter is his own business. It might further be noted that the recognition of one's own uneasiness, without at the same time feeling threatened by its exposure, is symptomatic of the villager's relatively strong ego structure. A Bang Chaner can maintain a certain

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front, know that it actually elicits and betrays his anxiety, but have such implicit trust in his own resources that he feels no need to alter his behavior. Simply stated: uneasiness when it occurs is accepted as a social psychological fact of life; it is not felt as a threat to the integrity of the personality.

The actual expressions of nervousness and inconsequential conversation vary considerably. Perhaps their most obvious (and justifiable) expression is when a villager, who wants to get something from another person, for example, a job, a loan, higher rent on land, is uncertain about the other's reaction and approaches him by hedging around the issue with giggles and light, irrelevant comments. This mode of behavior typically occurs when there is no history of reciprocal benefits between the parties or when a middleman cannot be used.[17] Although villagers themselves do not consider such comments "irrelevant" (probably because from a ritualistic point of view they are not), it is hard to define a detailed discussion of a person's buttons or belt buckle as anything but a kind of phatic communion. Sometimes conversations of this type will go on for twenty and thirty minutes, often branching off to include more topical interests such as the size of eggs or the calls of birds, before reaching the point. Frequently they never reach the point, since somewhere along the line the individual recognizes from the tone of the conversation that the other person is not in the proper mood to entertain his request; in this case, the individual will explain that he came simply "to chat." Sometimes the friend will begin to giggle uneasily (particularly if the protagonist's references to him contain an excess of flattery) as he becomes aware of the purpose of the conversation and wishes to evade facing the ultimate issue. Very often, even when the final request comes out, he can avoid it simply by giggling. Under such circumstances a giggle is crucially communicative: it is the person's polite substitute for "No," or "Let us bring this particular topic of conversation to an end." Giggling is a wonderfully effective way of carrying on a "conversation" (for those who can read its "vocabulary") because one can so readily convey his refusal, wariness, and even hostility while at all times maintaining the illusion of friendliness. It is precisely because the villagers' giggling frequently rests on such devious attitudes that it appears

[17] The *quid pro quo* basis of the former would permit a considerably more direct approach. It is not difficult to be frank with a person when both you and he realize that you are asking for an earlier obligation to be repaid or that you are creating a new one which may be called upon later when needed. Villagers are highly responsive to such obligations, often going to considerable effort and personal discomfort to meet them. A middleman, on the other hand, is used precisely to avoid the kind of delicate encounter described here. As a disinterested third party, he can be completely candid in his requests. However, for reasons of secrecy (usually when the request involves some potential competition or envy of other villagers, or perhaps some sharp-dealing) the use of a middleman may be inappropriate.

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A Bang Chan employee who walks out on his superior because he does not like the food he is served or a villager who agrees to lend a person money and then is not at home when the person calls for the loan can easily account for his actions by saying that circumstances had changed.

It must be noted, and this is crucial, that there is generally no animosity felt toward the employer with the unpalatable food, toward the fleeing[21] employee, or toward the unreliable creditor. Villagers are thoroughly conditioned to the possibility of such events and accept them simply as part of the inauspicious nature of life. That they are in fact considered inauspicious rather than results of the willful or malevolent intentions of others is not accidental. Bang Chaners faced with a breakdown in the fulfillment of commitments can of course point to the individual who directly caused it. But there is no satisfaction to be gained from this. The person who broke his obligation must have had his own good reason, and beyond this, there were probably other factors, unknown to both parties, that caused the breakdown. For most Bang Chaners, all human intentions are forever set within a framework of cosmic, and particularly moral, unpredictabilities.[22] If things do not work out the way one expects, it is most likely due to the inauspiciousness of the time, place, and persons involved. The proper time is particularly important. It is precisely for these reasons that the more important events in a person's life—marriage, trying to win a lottery or a maiden's heart, taking an important trip—are so often preceded by ceremonial attempts to decide the cosmologically auspicious conditions for effecting the event. These involve consultations with monks, shamans, and other religious practitioners, and highly ritualized forms are followed to select the appropriate conditions. (See Textor 1960 and 1962 for systematic discussions of the various kinds of problems and practices associated with this complex.) The kind of occurrences discussed above are not of this order of significance, but they do partake of the same cognitive assumptions that lead to such highly institutionalized practices. Thus, whereas most Occidentals would point exclusively to the actions of the other person as being both the necessary and sufficient cause of the interactional breakdown, Bang Chaners, who have considerably less confidence in human capacities, would really not be sure. To them, human volition represents only one of several indeterminate and uncontrollable factors giving rise to events. Who knows what accident, change of heart, sudden windfall—particularly one occasioned by something done by one of the parties several lives earlier—might intervene to alter what had originally been planned and agreed upon?

[21] This is just the term that villagers, with their wonderful sense of hyperbole, apply to such cases. The original Thai word is *sii*.

[22] I am indebted to L. M. Hanks, Jr., for suggesting this line of thought.

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These assumptions about the indeterminate nature of the universe and human actions are so integral to the villagers' cognitive orientations that Bang Chaners often hesitate to make even the most elementary kinds of prediction. Thus, in asking a village lad how he felt about his older brother's forthcoming ordination, I was told, "I don't know." The tone of his reply indicated that he was not evading the question, so I pursued the matter further: "Well, do you feel happy about it? Do you wish you were being ordained together with him?" He answered: "The ordination is not for another three days. I do not know how I will feel at that time. But when that time comes I will know." In another case, I was going up the canal with a villager to attend a "Kathin" being held at the monastery. (A "Kathin" is a fiesta-like merit making ceremony sponsored by a person or group of persons from outside the village at which new robes are presented to the monastery monks. It involves the sponsors, their local hosts, and all villagers who wish to attend.) Although not necessarily an annual event, "Kathins" are held often enough at Monastery Bang Chan so that this villager, who was also a member of the monastery lay committee, was thoroughly familiar with every aspect of them. Simply to make conversation, I asked him: "What is the 'Kathin' going to be like today?" to which he replied, "I do not know. I have not been to the monastery yet today." Assuming that his past experience with "Kathins" provided him with some knowledge of the goings-on, I went on: "Well, do you think there will be many people?" His answer: "I do not know. You never know what a situation is like until you meet it. I have not met this one yet today."

The point of these various illustrations is that they represent a psychological universe of uncertainty and unpredictability. And in this kind of universe—where one hesitates to build up sharply defined expectations and where one is forever aware of the mutability and frailty of the environment—it is not unusual that there should also be a high tolerance for interpersonal nonconformity. What the actual limits are, theoretical or empirical, to this tendency to nonconformity are uncertain. Much of the nonconformity is undoubtedly made possible, in the first instance, by the sociologically simple and relatively undifferentiated nature of Bang Chan society; that is, the actual number of functionally specific tasks and roles—those that require special competencies—are few, and any number of different individuals can perform them. Thus, when a Bang Chan employee walks out on his boss or when a wife walks out on her husband, their actions do not from a functional point of view disable the system. Since the requirements of the role of house servant or farmhand are characteristically simple and understood by all, the departing employee can usually be replaced by another individual. Similarly, since any adult—aunt, grandparents, older sibling—can and often does rear another's children, and

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lying configuration.) However, from the point of view of their etiology in the individual, it is clear that the villagers' tendencies toward loose relationships are related to early childhood experiences. A second source is their philosophical notions concerning the nature of the individual. These notions are largely cultural derivatives of Buddhist doctrine, although at the behavioral level they function simply as unstated premises which guide and tacitly define behavior.[25]

Reference was made earlier to the basic assumptions governing the socialization of the Bang Chan child. When the child enters the world of human beings, he is already a partially formed and psychologically independent individual, with his own *ʔupanidsaj* (ingrained character) and *khwaan* (soul-stuff), not to mention his stock of accumulated merit and demerit from countless previous lives which predetermines his character. The effect of these definitions is not only to award to the child a sense of psychic individuality that is partially[26] independent of any social environment to which he is exposed, but to assign to him a fundamental sense of psychological equality. We are not speaking here of *social* equality. The

[25] From a strict analytic point of view, it would probably be best to consider Buddhist doctrine as an abstract, codified representation of these premises rather than consider the premises as explicit, logically coherent deductions from Buddhist doctrine. To be sure, many Bang Chaners often explain and justify their actions by pointing directly to Buddhist doctrine, sometimes applying its tenets correctly, and sometimes not. But for most, Buddhism is a diffuse, ubiquitous *Weltanschauung*, the precise effects and applications of which the villagers are typically unconscious. It would probably not be incorrect to think of most religious "traditions," particularly the "Great" codified ones, as functioning in this way.

[26] The term "partially" is inserted here to indicate that despite these ontological notions, few villagers, as J. R. Hanks (1959) points out, ever consider "any human child so marvelously endowed . . . from previous existences that training is unnecessary." The child's *ʔupanidsaj*, *khwaan*, merit and demerit, as well as his *winjaan* (psychological motive power), *caj* (heart), and *phroomlikhid* ("the lines of his destiny as established by Brahma") are all crucial predeterminants of his character. But few Bang Chaners ever think of a person's character as due solely to the uncontrolled emergence of these pre-natal forces. Rather, they represent the basic psychological raw material with which parents and other socializing agents must work, and set the limits of these agents' enculturating efforts. What is important is that the limits—the "degrees of freedom" permitted the parents—tend to be narrowly defined. Intensive probing of informants indicates that there is no general agreement on whether these cosmological forces are more or less influential than parental training in shaping a child, although they tend to be invoked more frequently as explanations of negative characteristics and of unusual happenings, positive as well as negative, in the lives of individuals. Also, villagers are inclined to think of them as the reasons behind *particular* characteristics and events, assigning to parental training a more diffuse influence in the development of the child. Thus, when asked why a particular individual grew up to be a *nagkleeng* (an aggressive, daring, sometimes bullying type of person) and how one of their fellow Bang Chaners had grown up to become an admiral in the Thai Navy, informants attributed the character and success of these individuals respectively to their *ʔupanidsaj* and *kam*. (*Kam*, the Thai derivative of *karma*, is the proportion of merit to demerit that a person may have at any particular moment in

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858 828 child is clearly a social inferior, and is due all the prerogatives of his position: he is to be dealt with gently, kindly, and benevolently, with sympathetic regard for his incompetence; correlatively, he must be taught to express deference and obedience to superiors. Rather, the equality awarded the child results from the recognition that in the workings of the cosmic scale it is impossible to ascertain what the child could once have been or eventually will become, and he, like any soul, is always *potentially* of the same value as any other person. It is precisely for this reason that most Bang Chaners, if they mention it at all, are only mildly pleased rather than particularly proud that one of their own grew up to become an admiral in the Thai Navy. It comes as no great surprise that such a thing can happen. To them, it is no more unusual than that the prime minister himself should be a person who was born and reared in a village. (By the same token, the peasant background of these two individuals creates no special sense of personal identification with them on the part of the villagers. They are perceived simply as two unique *individuals*, their peasant roots being viewed as only one of the literally countless factors that made them what they are today.) [27] To a large extent, the equality of the child derives from the premise that he is not so much a child as he is a human being who happens to be at a particular stage in his ontological

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time). When probed further and asked if their parents' training may have had any influence on these individuals, they replied "yes" and "maybe" in the case of the admiral, but disavowed all parental influence in the case of the *nagkleeng*. A few said that the *nagkleeng* became that way because of bad friends.

One villager, phrasing his comment as a personal conjecture, volunteered that [115] the notion of parents being the major influence on a child's character is a "modern" idea. Another informant, the wife of a school teacher and well versed in her husband's teaching training manual (prepared in Bangkok by Western-trained educators) argued that a person's character is dependent "mostly on the influence of the home and school." However, since on other occasions she complained to me that one of her sons "does not have an *ʔupanidsaj* for studying, and there is nothing a parent can do but let the child have his own way," it would suggest that her commitment to the pronouncements of her husband's mentors was not too well internalized.

To avoid confusion, it might be added that from a historical point of view only one of the above cosmological forces (*kam*) is strictly Buddhistic in origin. The others are either Brahmanic (*khwaan* and *phroomlʔkhid*) or traditionally Thai (*ʔupanidsaj*, *winjaan*, and *caj*). Of all the terms, *kam* and *ʔupanidsaj* are the ones most frequently referred to when discussing an individual's character.

[27] It is precisely for this reason, as I indicated in an earlier writing on Thai social [565] structure (see Sharp *et al.* 1956: 163) that Thai society "cannot be said to have a [571] class system in the classical European sense of the term." People identify with others as individuals, not as representatives of social classes. [554]

The very fact that individual peasant boys can climb the social ladder to attain some of the highest social positions of the land, without it even being considered particularly noteworthy, attests to the fundamental equalitarian nature of the ideas underlying the Thai social system despite the obvious emphasis given to status and hierarchy in individual face-to-face relationships.

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career. From an epistemological point of view, there is of course nothing strange about such an approach. What is perhaps somewhat unique, however, is that the villagers actually use it as the point of departure in their treatment of the child.

The practical consequences of these equalitarian notions are manifold. For one thing, with the child defined as a separate and equal soul, the relationship between parent and child takes on a highly instrumental flavor; that is, rather than expressing love toward the child as an end in itself or otherwise treating him in ways that require no further justification (it is assumed that love is characteristically an absolute sentiment, not a means to any other satisfaction) villagers explicitly see the relationship between parent and child in contractual terms. Thus villagers say that they "are going to the trouble" of bringing up their children and "doing good things for them" (just as their own parents "went to the trouble" of bringing them up and "doing good things" for them) so that they will have someone to care for them in their old age and make merit for them when they die. Similarly, they say they love their parents because they are indebted to them for bringing them into the world. The language of the "contract" is poignantly explicit: "When I think of my mother, I think of the debt I owe her for bringing me into the world and feeding me so I would survive"; "Parents who do not teach their children how to *waj* [exhibit respect to the parents] get nothing from them. I did many *bunkhuns* [good things requiring reciprocation] for my daughter, so now she gives me everything"; "When I was three my father gave me to my uncle who fed me and trained me, so I loved my uncle more" (cf. pp. 64–66, L. M. Hanks 1959c, and Phillips 1959 for further documentation of this point).

In and of themselves there is nothing strange about these "contractual" criteria. However, they do reflect a fundamental recognition of the independence of parent and child and of the fact that parent and child have the *option* of fulfilling each other's needs. More specifically, they are expressions of the assumption that there is nothing intrinsic to the parent-child relationship that requires the two persons to be linked together. The relationship clearly is not fortuitous, but neither is it absolute. It functions primarily for the instrumental and symbiotic satisfactions that its participants can gain from it.[28] Lacking the absolute elements of an ultimate

[28] In his paper on "Changes in Family Life" in Bang Chan (1959c) L. M. Hanks notes: "At birth a parent ceremonially formally accepts obligations to an unknown infant soul lightly bound to its body; to this point the new-born one without relation to its parent has been under the protection of a spirit mother. This phrasing contrasts sharply with the Occidental concept of 'flesh and blood.'" In another place in the manuscript, Hanks also comments: ". . . but every case [every kinship tie] is reducible, if one presses the question, to benefits of an older or richer or stronger for the

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1950; and Wheelis 1958.) At best, it would suggest that the Thai informant was faced with a difficult problem external to himself—perhaps finding a job or a spouse, or thinking of his future—and was appraising his ability to deal with that problem. Also, such an appraisal would have a strong constraining element: the necessity to control one's hopes and desires (perhaps for the hypothetical job or spouse) in order to avoid potential pain or disappointment; in essence, "beware of your limitations; do not forget your station." This is in turn supported by certain Buddhist concepts, such as *ʔubeegkhaa*, or stoical indifference to the vicissitudes of life, among others.

Whether there is *any* way to express handily in Thai the Western notion of "the need for self-acceptance" is doubtful. Most villagers are too thoroughly narcissistic to require such a concept in their cognitive maps. Alternatively, there are other more direct ways of saying what "knowing myself" might mean in Thai, for example, "controlling my desires," "knowing whether I have the ability to do the job," or by referring directly to Buddhist doctrine. As such, these statements would be an expression of piety or the bolstering of one's self-confidence (or steeling oneself against failure) rather than psychic introspection.

A similar interpretive problem exists with the completion "his family." Because Thai kinship relations are so strongly influenced by concepts of benevolent superiority and dependent inferiority, most expressions of the need for affiliation with the family immediately imply the related need of succorance: security, support, protection, and sympathy, either as source or beneficiary.

The point of these comments is that the responses must always be first interpreted in the villagers' terms, not ours. Once made, precisely by explanatory notes such as these, these interpretations become part of the "data" and serve as a basis for our analysis. It should be recognized, however, that anthropological mythology (and these particular examples) to the contrary, not *all* the responses are interpretively dissimilar. When a villager says, *"When he hit me, I . . .* must hit him back," he means precisely the same thing we do. The point, therefore, is to be extremely sensitive to the possibility of differential meanings, underscore and explain it when it occurs, and use the native interpretation as a prerequisite and corrective to our own. For a brief but brilliant theoretical discussion of this problem see Bohannan 1959.

### *The Psychological Meaning of the Responses*

The fourth premise concerns the psychological "meaning" of the responses. There are several aspects of this problem which require specification.

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TABLE 19

| *He was most afraid of . . .*<br>*The thing raw is most afraid of is (namely) . . .* | | |
|---|---|---|
| THREATS TO PHYSICAL WELL-BEING: | 61% | poverty. If he had enough, he would not be afraid. |
| | | having nothing to eat. I mean when there is a flood, and all the paddy is lost, and we will starve because there is no rice to eat. |
| | | not having enough to eat. |
| | | having fever; getting sick and having no money. |
| | | fire, because when a house catches fire it is a great loss. |
| | | death. |
| | | snakes. He is not afraid of ghosts. He can walk in the dark. But snakes are dangerous. He does not like to go anywhere after dark. |
| ACTIONS OF OTHERS: | 20% | people. When she had money, she was afraid she would be robbed. When she did not have any, she was in difficulty. |
| | | her father beating her. |
| MALEVOLENT SPIRITS: | 10% | ghosts; but if there were no choice (no place to go, no way to get out of the situation), then she could manage. |
| | | death; of ghosts haunting him. If the ghosts don't haunt him, he is not afraid. |

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topics) it was noted that, "uneasiness, when it occurs, is accepted as a social psychological fact of life; it is not felt as a threat to the integrity of the personality." The data here would tend to reinforce that conclusion. At the same time, however, it must be remembered that 20 percent of the informants do give what is at least symbolic expression to their fear of others, and it would, therefore, be most inappropriate to go to the other extreme and assert that villagers have no anxiety about interpersonal relationships. I also noted in the earlier discussion that "the nervousness that is betrayed indicates some of the internal strain that villagers undergo in having to maintain a constant front of politeness." This appears to be a case of their simply accepting—without worry, shame, or any other secondary anxiety—their own shortcomings. The anxiety that is experienced is just not *felt* as a psychological burden.

One of the responses above, although idiosyncratic, merits attention. This is the response of the villager, age 52, who says that she is frightened by her *karma*: "it depends on *raw*'s mind [or heart]. Some people are afraid of ghosts. They see things and they believe that they see ghosts. That is not right. They see falling leaves and they think that is a ghost. There is nothing when they approach. The most frightening thing is bad *karma*. It

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follows you. If you kill a living thing in this life, a living thing will kill you in the next life." What is surprising is that there are not more responses of this type, especially from older villagers. The psychological significance of this kind of response is of course most difficult to assess. Although on the surface it is an expression of personal inadequacy—an expression that the informant has not done as well for herself as she could have—its essentially timeless and unpredictable quality (one never knows when the product of bad *kam* will issue) almost takes it out of the sphere of direct emotional import. It is in fact an inordinately intellectualized response, probably just as expressive of the informant's sense of psychological security as it is expressive of her anxiety. Although bad *kam* is an omnipresent and unavoidable anxiety, the fact that one can make merit to reduce such *kam* and the possibility that one might in fact have less bad *kam* than one's anxiety would lead one to believe (one never knows) is a source of considerable psychological comfort.

The next item, *"His greatest problem was . . ."* is somewhat more cerebral and reflective than the preceding one. Villagers are asked to indicate not what frightens them, but what worries and generally concerns them. Thus, although their responses are in many ways similar to those given on the previous item, they are also considerably less extreme. All reference to malevolent spirits, for example, is missing here. Again, the majority of villagers (57 percent) describe as their greatest problem their well-being and survival. Their responses, however, lack the sense of trepidation that colored their earlier replies. Here, twelve villagers phrase their replies in terms of worrying about obtaining money, being rich, having money to spend, and the like, rather than in the more plaintive terms of being anxious about poverty, a response given by only one villager. Thirteen informants also say that they are worried about "making a living" or their "work," responses that are more ambiguous than the above in that it is difficult to determine whether villagers are worried about having sufficient income from the work or are disturbed by difficulties involved in the work itself (how their rice crop is coming along). Nine informants say that they are worried about starving, not having enough to eat; one is worried about illness; one about floods; and none about death or poisonous snakes. The reappearance of the food response should not of course be overlooked.

The second major category, encompassing the responses of 24 percent of the sample, relates to worrying about other people. However, almost half these responses (11 percent of the total) are protective and succoring responses, where ego is concerned with preventing harm to his family. The other 13 percent describe ego's concern about getting along with other people. Two of these responses refer explicitly to the informant's worry over the words he chooses in relating to others or that he speak sensibly.

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774 is recognized to be capricious; and (4) his departure from the body is both cause and effect of the loss of one's wits, steadiness, and equilibrium. If the *khwaan* stays away too long, the individual may become deranged and may die.

*125 *128 152 181 828 In these terms, the seven individuals who say that when they are frightened they would call back their "soul-stuff" seem to be expressing two related needs: a recognition of their ultimate dependence on supernatural forces and, very much like the majority group of informants, a preoccupation with psychological stability. There is in fact implicit to these responses almost an assumption that one of the marks of an adult, civilized "human being" (in its basic ontological sense) is the achievement of stability, orderliness, and stoicism in a universe—both inner and outer—that at any time may regress to a more primitive, chaotic state. The great attention that villagers give to being *riab-rɔɔj* (neat, clean, well-organized in appearance, demeanor, and speech); the fact that they often distinguish between adults and children in terms of the disorganization and randomness of the latter's behavior; the very fact that an individual's *khwaan* is most wayward during childhood; the high value that is placed upon being *chɔɔj* and the negative value that is placed on having a "hot heart" (*caj rɔɔn*) are all expressive of this assumption.

*125 *128 152 There are a few other categories of response to the above item that should be mentioned, although none is held by more than 8 percent of the sample. Four villagers say that the best thing to do when frightened is to run away; three villagers assert that they are never frightened; three do say that they would investigate the cause of the fright, indicating that this response is not completely lacking in Bang Chan; two say that they would comfort themselves; two are simply afraid; and two more have no idea of what to do under the circumstances.

To the item, *"When something worried him, he usually . . ."* 45 percent of the sample responds by saying that they would feel anxious, uneasy, uncomfortable, or unhappy. In essence, they seek no solution to their hypothetical problem, but simply accept the state of anxiety that has been created. For a few of them, the anxiety is extreme: they say they "could not eat, could not sleep, could not work," a response that I have heard several times in Bang Chan from villagers who were actually worrying through a problem. The other major response, held by 40 percent of the sample, is to perseverate over the problem: to keep thinking about it, to think about it constantly, or, as one villager expresses it, *"When something worried him, he usually . . .* thought about it. Sometimes he dreamt of it too."

The major theme of both the above responses is, of course, that although villagers handle their worries in an emotionally meaningful way,

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losing their *khwaam*, as it were—if they release their anger. This is the fear of "letting go" and of regressing to a primitive psychological state. Every impulse of an adult villager is to fight this tendency. Second, by controlling their aggressions, they are not imposing their own problems on others and are maintaining the attitudes of "respect" and tolerance—as well as emotional indifference—that are otherwise so important to them. This consideration obviously does not account for the absence of aggression; it simply points up the fact that the aggression that does exist is dealt with internally, rather than socially. Finally, their aggression control seems to be based upon fear of reprisal. Although in a few instances this may be a realistic fear, it is principally a straightforward projection: they know only too well how painful the reprisals would be of people who hold the feelings of hostility that they themselves hold. This consideration is not inconsistent with my earlier remarks on the difficulty villagers have in investing hostility in others. Rather, it follows directly: the villagers' difficulty is not based upon lack of hostility, but upon the lack of social relationships which are sufficiently meaningful to merit that hostility. Rather than work out their aggressions behaviorally—in and with other human beings—they work them out in the isolation of their own inner psychodynamics.

I have gone into considerable detail here because "aggression" is the one area of the villagers' lives where the meaning of behavior is not at all apparent from its manifestations. Without such background material, the following SCT results would probably also have little significance.

The first item, *"He most often gets angry when . . . ,"* reveals some of those patterns with unexpected clarity. Ostensibly, the item asks informants simply to identify the various sources of aggression. However, the term for "angry" (*krood*) in this sentence explicitly means "angry toward other people." [11] Thus, one would expect villagers to focus on the activities or characteristics of others—or, at minimum, on some dimension of a social relationship—which elicits their ire. However, their most frequent response is to ignore the semantic pressure to refer to others and to dwell on characteristics within themselves that cause their anger. Thirty percent of

[11] The importance of this point becomes apparent when *krood* is contrasted with some of the other "angrys" in the Thai lexicon: *moohoo*, angry at the situation in which one is entangled rather than toward another person; *chun*, angry at the action of another person, but not the person himself, with a suggestion of helplessness (the blast of a radio as one is falling asleep); *chiw*, to *feel* angry at another person, but to conceal its expression; *moohoochunchiw*, angry all the time, at anything, because one has a character trait to be angry; *khumkhaen*, revengeful. That the villagers should have such a rich set of lexical contrasts in this area—and I have excluded terms which are simply variations on the intensity of "angry" ("irritated" *vs.* "enraged")—is not without significance. "Anger" obviously is an emotion to which villagers attend.

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the sample responds in this manner. Thus, they say that they are hostile toward other people when they themselves are "in a bad mood and tired," "are rattled," "have done wrong," or "are old. When one gets old, one's tongue becomes sharp and one gets angry easily." The emphasis on the loss of control or psychic equilibrium can be noted here, as well as the fact that although these disequilibrium forces are in themselves not very extreme, they are presented as ample justification for anger. Even when villagers do mention others, it is not in reference to others' actions so much as it is in reference to the emotions that those actions elicit, that is, "*He most often gets angry at other people when* . . . he is cross, such as, when other people are infuriating or annoying."

TABLE 23

***He most often gets angry when . . .***
**Khon *most often get angry at other people when* . . .**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| SELF-REFERENCE: | 30% | when *raw* make an error in the work. I, too, get angry.<br>she has done something wrong.<br>he is in a temper.<br>he is drinking, drunk. If he is not drunk he does not become angry easily. |
| OTHERS DO NOT SATISFY SELF: | 19% | they disobey him.<br>they are not good to her. |
| GOSSIP: | 23% | people say bad things about him.<br>other people accuse him about something that has no truth. |
| QUARRELING: | 23% | they quarrel.<br>he has no happiness; when other people molest him often. |

Related to the above are the responses given by 19 percent of the sample which, although referring to others, focus not on any objective negative quality or action of others (as in the two categories to follow) but on the simple fact that others do not satisfy the wishes and demands of the self. Again, the self—its needs, value, and significance—is primary. Villagers falling in this category say that they are most often angry at others when "people do not do what *raw* have told them to do," "they are not good to her," "people do not do things according to my wish." Informants giving these responses fall in all age and socioeconomic categories, suggesting that they are not necessarily the attitudes of social superordinates, which an older age or "wealthy" economic position might otherwise imply.

The final two categories, each representing 23 percent of the sample, describe as the causes of anger the direct actions of others. In one case,

63

Question 29.h. Reasons respondents give for why some old men have not served in priesthood (multiple choice replies).

| | |
|---|---|
| **Immediate deprivation** | |
| Dependents (worry about family, have wives, they have many children) | 78 |
| Financial reasons (they are very poor, they have no money, their parents are very poor, in debt) | 56 |
| Property (worry about property and profession) | 15 |
| **Life situation** | |
| Married too young (too early, have wives early, "fell in love, got married, acquired dependents, so could not get ordained") | 50 |
| Wrong orientation to life (they believe in a wrong way of life, they are lazy and not religious, they pay too much attention to wordly things, they cannot pray, "they don't think of their parents enough, they think only of themselves, and only of the present") | 19 |
| **Religious belief system** | |
| Apathy to priesthood (they do not like it, feel indifferent about ordination, have no intention of being ordained) | 43 |
| Indifference to Buddhism (they are not true believers, they did not participate in religion, "they aren't sons of Lord Buddha," "they don't love their race or Buddha") | 19 |
| **Qualification** | |
| Illiteracy, ignorance (they cannot read, they are ignorant, "afraid cannot abide by teachings and discipline," "they cannot read so they are ashamed if they become priest") | 21 |
| Personality (they are ruffians, they are disorderly drinking men, they are poorly brought up, they are not good enough, mental disturbance) | 11 |
| **Background** | |
| Lack of parental supervision (their parents can't control them, "nobody would give the advice and so they did not enter the priesthood) | 5 |
| Parental objection ("Some men have quarrels and their parents don't want them ordained," "they cannot receive permission from their parents") | 2 |
| **Other reasons** ("Because such men did not get ordained in previous incarnation, either," "because he has sinned in the past life and has had luck in this life," "they have to be soldiers," "they don't know the merit of sin," "they are too old, their merit did not reach the certain point so they did not have the chance," "they have children and sometimes feel ashamed before sons who have been ordained," "they forget") | 8 |
| **No Answer** | 63 |
| **Don't know, unascertainable** | 37 |

125
793
792
828
829